

Reasons and Occasions of
**REVELATION
OF THE HOLY QURAN**
Lubâb An-Nuqûl Fî Asbâb An-Nuzûl

لُبَابُ النُّقُولِ
فِي
أَسْبَابِ النُّزُولِ
لِسَيِّطِي

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Preface

All perfect praise be to Allâh. We praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allâh Almighty from the evil of our souls and from our misdeeds. Whomsoever Allâh Guides, none can lead astray, and whomsoever Allâh Leaves astray, none can guide. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allâh, and that Muhammad [peace be upon him] is His Slave and Messenger. May Allâh Almighty Send His blessings and peace on him, and on his family and Companions.

Without doubt, to know the cause of a thing, the occasion on which an incident has come in a particular way, and the circumstances under which an event has taken place in a certain manner can remove a great deal of ambiguity because of which it is not only difficult to understand this thing, but also it is possible to understand it quite differently from what it really is.

From this point of view we can perceive the importance of knowing the causes of the revelation of the Qur'anic verses, the occasion on which each one was sent upon The Messenger of Allâh [peace be upon him], the context in which it should be placed, and the event or incident it was intended to serve. In fact, knowing the causes of revelations is sufficient to remove the greater portion of the abstruseness because of which one may possibly be put to confusion as to understanding the Qur'anic verses. In many cases, the interpretation given to a Qur'anic verse without getting acquainted with the occasion on which it was revealed takes one into a way very far from the real meaning; and since this is not acceptable in the ordinary cases which relate to men, then what about the Qur'an which should be understood just as it is meant by Allâh Almighty to be without distortion or deviation?

In this connection, I am very pleased to introduce to the reader one of the most important and the most advantageous books in this field, I mean *Kitâb Lubâb An-Nuqûl Fî Asbâb An-Nuzûl* written by 'Abd-Ar-Rahmân Ibn Abu Bakr Jalâl Ad-Dîn As-Suyûti (849-911 A.H. / 1445-1505 A.D.).

What distinguishes this book from Al-Wâhidi's *Aṣbâb An-Nuzûl* is its being abridged, even though concentrated. In spite of being shorter in size, it contains, in addition to Al-Wâhidi's narrations, much more narrations and reports which make it more extensive regardless of seeming more concise. Furthermore, the hadiths in it are attributed to their narrators in the reliable and trustworthy books of hadith such as *Sahîh Al-Bukhârî*, *Sahîh Muslim*, the four *Sunan* of Abu Dâwûd, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Mâjah and *An-Nasâ'i*, the *Musnads* of Ahmad, Al-Bazzâr and Abu Ya'li, the *Musannafs* of 'Abd-Ar-Razzâq and Ibn Abu Shaybah, and others.

As-Suyûti, the author of the book, is one of the greatest and the most encyclopedic and proliferating scholars in hadith, *tafsir*, grammar, linguistics, history, literature, *fiqh*, and other sciences. Born and brought up in Cairo, he traveled to Syria, Hejaz, Yemen, India and Maghrib before he returned to Egypt to reside there. He took over many offices; and when he was forty years old he secluded himself in his house and devoted himself to writing. He composed about six hundred books between large volumes and small epistles. According to Mr. Ash-Sharqâwi in his *Maktabat Al-Jalâl As-Suyûti*, the number of his books is seven hundred and twenty-five.

The most famous of his compositions include *Al-Jâmi' Al-Kabîr*; *Al-Jâmi' As-Saghîr Fî Ahaâdîth An-Nadhîr Al-Bashîr*; *Al-Itqân Fî 'Ulûm Al-Qur'an*; *Ad-Durr Al-Manthûr*; *Tabaqât Al-Huffâth*; *Tabaqât Al-Mufassirîn*; *Al-Ashbâh Wan-Nathâ'ir*; *Bughyat Al-Wu'âh*; *Ham' Al-Hawâmi'*; and many others. He is also the co-author of *Tafsîr Al-Jalâlayn* along with Jalâl Ad-Dîn Al-Mahalli.

I hope this book will be of benefit to the reader and an addition to our good deeds in the world and the hereafter.

**Translator
Cairo 2015**

In the Name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Introduction

All perfect praise be to Allâh Who created for everything a cause, and sent upon His servant (Muhammad) a wondrous Book in which there is the wisdom and news of all things. May Allâh send His blessing and peace upon our chief Muhammad, the noblest of mankind - their Arabs and non-Arabs – who has the purest family status and the best ancestry among them all, and upon his family and Companions.

Here it is a book I have called Lubâb An-Nuqûl Fî Asbâb An-Nuzûl which I have summarized from the compositions of hadith and fundamentals, and edited from the books of tafsîr and reported traditions. I ask Allâh Almighty to make it a source of benefit: He is the Most Generous Whom one can ask, and the greatest One in Whom one can have hope.

In fact, the knowledge of the causes of revelation have many benefits. He has mistaked who says that it has no benefit, being part of history.

One of its benefits is to know the meaning or remove the abstruseness:

According to Al-Wâhidi: “It is impossible to know the meaning of a Qur’anic verse without knowing its story and clarifying the occasion on which it was revealed.”

Ibn Daqîq Al-‘Id said: “Knowing the causes of revelation is a strong way of understanding the meanings of the Qur’an.”

Ibn Taymiyah said: “Knowing the causes of revelation helps one understand the meaning of the Qur’anic verse, since the knowledge of the cause leads to the knowledge of the effect.”

The meaning of some Qur’anic verses seemed abstruse to some of the predecessors till they knew the occasion on which they were revealed thereupon this abstruseness was removed.

I have discussed the examples of this in the nineth kind of my book Al-Itqaan Fî ‘Ulûm Al-Qur’ân, and mentioned other benefits of it which the context of this introduction does not permit to repeat here.

According to the words of Al-Wâhidi: “It is not lawful to talk about the causes of revelation without narrating or hearing from those who saw the revelation, learnt the causes of revelation and investigated all ways to know them”.

Muhammad ibn Sîrîn said: I asked ‘Ubaydah about (the cause of the revelation of) a Qur’anic verse and he said to me: “Fear Allâh! Say nothing but what is right. They have passed away who know the occasions on which the Qur’anic verses were revealed.”

According to another scholar: “The Companions knew the causes of revelation by presumptions relevant to the cases in connection with which the Qur’anic verses were revealed. Perhaps some of them refrained from giving the final word in this respect, and rather preferred to say, I think this Qur’anic verse was revealed on such and such an occasion.” A typical example is taken from the statement of Az-Zubayr commenting on Allâh’s saying (what means): {But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no discomfort from your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission.} [An-Nisâ’ 65]

In his ‘Ulûm Al-Hadîth Al-Hâkim said: “If a Companion who saw the revelation told that a Qur’anic verse was revealed on such and such an occasion, it will be regarded an attributed hadith.”

This methodology was followed by others such as Ibn As-Salâh. The example they give for this is the narration of Muslim on the authority of Jâbir [Allâh be pleased with him] in which he said: The Jews used to say: “If one has sexual intercourse with his wife (in the vagina) from the back, then she will deliver a squint-eyed child.” So Allâh Almighty revealed (what means): {Your women are a tilth for you; so come up to your tilth however you will, and send forward (good deeds) for yourselves.} [Al-Baqarah 223] [Al-Bukhâri; Muslim; Abu Dâwûd; and others]

Commenting on the subject, Ibn Taymiyah said: “They say that such and such Qur’anic verse was revealed in connection with such and such a thing, thereby intending sometimes that it is the cause of revelation, and sometimes that it is part of the meaning of the Qur’anic verse regardless of not being the occasion on which it was revealed. There is a dispute between the scholars over the statement of the Companion, This Qur’anic verse was revealed in connection with such and such a thing: is it regarded an attributed hadith in which he mentions the cause of revelation, or is it regarded part of interpretation which does not rise up to the degree of the attributed hadith? Al-Bukhâri considers it an attributed hadith, and others do not do so like the majority of Musnads, e.g. Musnad Ahmad and others. But if

an occasion is mentioned on which the Qur'anic verse was revealed, all scholars regard it as an attributed hadith."

In his *Al-Burhaan*, Az-Zarkashi said: "It is known, from the habit of the Companions and Tâbi'is, that if anyone of them said that this Qur'anic verse was revealed in connection with such and such a thing. He intended that it implies this ruling or meaning, and not that this was the cause of its revelation. It is, in this sense, a deduction of the ruling with the Qur'anic verse rather than the report of a particular event."

To me, not all Qur'anic verses were revealed because of attributed events, otherwise, was the surah of *Al-Fîl*, for instance, revealed because of the coming of the Abyssinians to invade Makkah and ruin the Ka'bah as mentioned by Al-Wâhidi? That is not the cause of its revelation: This surah and its like just give reports of the news of the past events, like the stories of the people of Noah [peace be upon him], 'Âd, Thamûd, the building of the Ka'bah, and so forth.

A mention may also be made of Allâh's saying (what means): {and take you (O people) the Station of Abraham as a place of prayer} [Al-Baqarah 125] The occasion Al-Wâhidi mentions of this, i.e. Allâh's taking Abraham as an intimate friend, is not one of the causes of revelation of the Qur'an.

Here, some notices should be made:

1- We accept the narration reported from the Companions if it is transmitted by anyone of the Tâbi'is, though regarded as Mursal, provided that the chain of narrators up to him is authentic, and he is one of the leading imams of *Tafsîr* who take from the Companions like Mujâhid, 'Ikrimah, Sa'îd ibn Jubayr and their fellows.

2- The commentators, more often, mention many causes of the revelation of one Qur'anic verse. In this case, the right methodology is to look at the used phrase. If one of them said, it was revealed in connection with such and such a thing, and another one said, it was revealed in connection with such and such a thing, and then mentioned something different, what is intended then would be the interpretation and not the cause of revelation, as we have already referred to, and there is no contradiction between both if the wording of the Qur'anic verse extends over them as I have explained, in detail, in my *Al-Itqân*. But those are closer to the compositions of the rulings and meanings of the Qur'an than to the compositions of the causes of revelation.

If one made a reference that this Qur'anic verse was revealed in connection with such and such a thing, and another mentioned a cause

of revelation, different from that thing, the latter's shall be sanctioned. For instance, Allâh said (what means): {Your women are a tilth for you; so come up to your tilth however you will, and send forward (good deeds) for yourselves.} [Al-Baqarah 223] Ibn 'Umar [Allâh be pleased with them] said: "It was revealed to give a concession to men to have sexual (vaginal) relations with their wives from the back". Jâbir [Allâh be pleased with him] mentioned a cause of revelation different from that (i.e. the statement of the Jews: "If one has sexual intercourse with his wife (in the vagina) from the back, then she will deliver a squint-eyed child."). In this case, the statement of Jâbir should be sanctioned.

If two different causes were mentioned by two different narrators, it may be that the Qur'anic verse was revealed on both occasions as we shall see in the Qur'anic verse of Li'ân; or that the Qur'anic verse was revealed twice as we shall see in the Qur'anic verse of the spirit, the concluding Qur'anic verses of the surah of An-Nahl, and Allâh's saying (what means): {It is not (fitting) for the Prophet and those who believe to ask Forgiveness for the polytheists even though they be near of kin (to them), after it has become clear to them that they are the dwellers of the Fire (because they died in a state of polytheism).} [At-Tawbah 113]

The reasons we depend upon in making our choice include to look at the Isnâd and whether or not the narrator of one of both causes attended the occasion, or is one of the leading scholars of Tafsîr like Ibn 'Abbâs, Ibn Mas'ûd [Allâh be pleased with them] and others.

3- The most famous book in this field now is Al-Wâhidi's; yet my book is distinguished from it by:

- a- It is shorter and more abridged (though denser).
- b- It contains much more narrations than those reported by Al-Wâhidi.
- c- Each hadith is attributed to its narrator from among the authors of the considerable books, like the six books (Sahîh Al-Bukhâri, Sahîh Muslim, Sunan Abu Dâwûd, Sunan At-Tirmidhi, Sunan Ibn Mâjah, and Sunan An-Nasâ'i), Al-Mustadrak (of Al-Hâkim), Sahîh ibn Hibbân, Sunan Al-Bayhaqi, Sunan Ad-Daraqatni, Musnad Ahmad, Musnad Al-Bazzâr, Musnad Abu Ya'li, At-Tabarâni three Mu'jams: Al-Kabîr, Al-Awsat and As-Saghîr, Tafsîr At-Tabari, Tafsîr Ibn Abu Hâtim, Tafsîr Ibn Mardawayh, Tafsîr Abu Ash-Shaykh, Tafsîr Ibn Hibbân, Tafsîr Al-Firyâbi, Tafsîr 'Abd-Ar-Razzâq, Tafsîr Ibn Al-Mundhir and others.

As for Al-Wâhidi, he sometimes reports the hadith with its isnâd which reveals his lacking knowledge of the narrator. Doubtless, attributing the hadith to any of the books mentioned above is preferable to attributing it to the transmission of Al-Wâhidi, because those books are famous and reliable and the people always rely on them. He sometimes brings the hadith in a way which does not show whether or not it has Isnâd.

d- The authentic is distinguished from the inauthentic and the accepted from the rejected of hadiths.

e- An accommodation is made between the different and various narrations.

f- All things which are not among the causes of revelation are omitted.

That is the end of the introduction; and now let us begin our intended work with the aid of Allâh, the worshipped Sovereign.

